DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 491 CG 024 498

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TITLE Study of Guidance Services in the High Schools, 1988-89. OREA Report.
INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.
PUB DATE Feb 90
NOTE 74p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization; *Counseling Services; *High Schools; High School Students; Program Effectiveness; School Counseling; *School Counselors; *School Guidance
IDENTIFIERS *New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

Guidance services are an integral part of the New York City public high school system, but because each high school plans and implements its own guidance program autonomously, little is known about the actual organization and operation of guidance activities citywide. In March 1989 New York city high school guidance departments (N=122) were surveyed in order to describe and analyze current high school guidance practices. Administration and supervision of guidance departments, numbers and kinds of personnel working in guidance departments, the daily activities of counselors, communication within guidance departments, integration of guidance services within the larger school community, the referral system, caseload size, student needs, departmental strengths and weaknesses, and the problems that hinder effective delivery of guidance services were examined. The results of the survey indicated that current guidance services are more integrated into everyday school life than they were 15 years ago. However, respondents also indicated that guidance department organization and staffing patterns do not facilitate the quality of guidance delivery necessary to successfully address student needs, which are acute across the spectrum. In addition, it was found that the administration of high school guidance departments comprises a discernible hierarchy, with distinct domains of decision-making, marked by an institutionalized referral system, too much paperwork, and insufficient resources. The counselors, too, are swamped by excessive caseloads, distracted by heavy paperwork, and too often frustrated by their inability to deal effectively with serious student needs. (ABL)

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ED349491

OREA Report

STUDY OF GUIDANCE SERVICES IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS

1988-89

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February 1990

STUDY OF GUIDANCE SERVICES IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS

1988-89

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EVALUATION SUMMARY

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Guidance services are an integral part of the New York City public high school system, but because each high school plans and implements its own guidance program autonomously, little is known about the actual organization and operation of guidance activities citywide. In March 1989, the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) surveyed 122 New York City high school guidance departments, and interviewed a representative sample of 36 licensed counselors, in order to describe and analyze current high school guidance practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

OREA designed this study to examine a range of issues relating to the delivery of guidance services to high school students. These issues included the administration and supervision of guidance departments, the numbers and kinds of personnel working in guidance departments, the daily activities of counselors, communications within guidance departments, the integration of guidance services within the larger school community, the referral system, caseload size, student needs, departmental strengths and weaknesses, and the problems that hinder effective delivery of guidance services.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OREA evaluators found that current guidance services are more integrated into everyday school life than they were 15 years ago. However, respondents indicated that guidance department organization and staffing patterns do not facilitate the quality of guidance delivery necessary to successfully address student needs, which are acute across the spectrum.

In addition, OREA evaluators found that the administration of high school guidance departments comprises a discernible hierarchy, with distinct domains of decision-making, marked by an institutionalized referral system, too much paperwork, and insufficient resources. The counselors, too, are swamped by excessive caseloads, distracted by heavy paperwork, and too often frustrated by their inability to deal effectively with the serious student needs.

In most schools the assistant principal for Pupil Personnel Services oversees guidance department operations, and consults with the principal on guidance goals and strategies. Communication of department priorities and procedures from the top down--from administrators to counselors and other guidance personnel--is usually effective. The data suggest, however, that in some cases communications up the hierarchy, and horizontally--between counselors--may be less efficient. Moreover, the

interactions between counselors and teachers, who have more contact with the students than any other school personnel, are often indirect, being channelled through the assistant principals for Supervision. Finally, most assistant principals for Pupil Personnel Services are overburdened, and many respondents suggested that the roles and responsibilities of this position be reevaluated.

The greatest strengths of the guidance system are academic and personal counseling. College, career, and vocational counseling--the traditional concerns of high school guidance departments--are particularly well developed, and make effective use of a variety of counseling formats and resources. Procedures for absentee follow-up and crisis intervention have improved considerably over the last 15 years. Respondents indicated, however, that health counseling, substance abuse counseling and, especially, family counseling are guidance imperatives that are not being adequately met.

The biggest obstacles to the successful delivery of guidance services were excessive paperwork, the lack of family involvement in the guidance process, and large caseloads. A total of 856 licensed counselors, assisted by 2,892 guidance associates, were responsible for counseling well over one-quarter of a million high school students in the 122 schools surveyed. Respondents suggested that some combination of departmental reorganization and increased allocations for guidance personnel would be necessary to cope with ever more critical student needs.

Based on the results of this survey, OREA offers the following recommendations:

- Further research should be conducted to gather qualitative data through direct observations and analysis of guidance case studies. Teachers' and students' perceptions of the guidance system should be included in such a study. This will provide a more accurate assessment of the quality and effectiveness of guidance counseling as an integrated component of the total high school environment.

- Family counseling services should be improved and expanded.

- Guidance planners and high school administrators should evaluate strategies for reorganizing guidance delivery in order to facilitate greater flexibility and efficiency in high school guidance departments.

- Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated in order to allow counselors more time with students, and caseloads should be reduced to 250 or fewer students per counselor.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In 1972, a major study of guidance services in New York City public high schools concluded that the system was in crisis, and suggested that extensive reorganization and a massive infusion of funds would be necessary to rectify the situation.* Initial progress toward achieving those goals was brought to an abrupt halt by the city's fiscal crisis of 1975, when dramatic cuts in funding for guidance services virtually crippled the system. Since then, guidance departments have rebounded and expanded considerably, but serious problems persist.

Many of the issues identified in the 1972 study are also apparent in the present study, conducted by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) in Spring 1989. Moreover, some of the models suggested in the early 1970s have obviously had an impact on current guidance practices in today's schools. Systems planning, centralized data and resources, curriculum-orientation, the reduction of caseloads, group counseling, family counseling, accountability are all salient features of today's guidance thinking and planning. This study sheds light on how some of these ideas have fared in practice.

In 1971, there were nearly 300,000 students in New York City's public high schools, being served by 382 full-time

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*Guidance Advisory Council, Agenda for Action (New York: Board of Education, Office of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services, 1972.) The Guidance Advisory Council was assisted in this study by the Academy for Educational Development, Inc., and the report was prepared by the Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance of the Board of Education.

licensed guidance counselors--222 general counselors for all students, and 160 counselors for students with special needs. An additional 3,000 or so part-time staff assisted in guidance delivery.*

OREA evaluators found that there are currently about 226,000 students in the 122 high schools surveyed, and a total of 856 full-time licensed counselors--472 general education counselors, and 384 counselors of other kinds. In addition, more than 2,800 part-time personnel do guidance-related work in these schools.

Precisely how these personnel are currently distributed throughout the high school guidance system depends on the city's social geography, and the budget-allocation decisions made by principals and administrators at the local level. Since each school is effectively autonomous, little is known about how these personnel are organized and supervised or how they work. This study addresses these and related questions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

OREA designed this study to examine a range of issues relating to the delivery of guidance services to high school students. These issues included: the administration and supervision of guidance departments, the numbers and kinds of personnel working in guidance, the daily activities of counselors, communications within guidance departments, the integration of guidance within the larger school community, the referral system, caseload size, student needs, departmental

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*Guidance Advisory Council, Agenda for Action, p18; p24ff.

strengths and weaknesses, and the problems that hinder effective delivery of guidance services.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In spring 1989, OREA distributed surveys to all New York City public high schools,* and interviewed 36 licensed counselors in a representative sample of 18 schools selected from all six superintendencies.**

The questionnaires were filled out by administrative personnel from 122 high schools, including 98 academic-comprehensive, vocational-technical, and specialized schools in the borough superintendencies,*** and 24 alternative schools and special programs. More than three-quarters of the questionnaires (77 percent) were completed by the schools' head of guidance, who identified themselves as either Assistant Principals/ Administration/Assistant Principal/Pupil Personnel Services (52 percent) or Assistant Principals/Guidance. Principals (18

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*There are four types of public high schools in New York City: academic-comprehensive, vocational-technical, specialized, and alternative high schools and special programs.

**New York City's public high schools are overseen by six Superintendents: the Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and BASIS Superintendencies, and the Superintendency of Alternative High Schools and Special Programs. (BASIS schools include all Staten Island schools and some in Brooklyn.)

***The Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and BASIS Superintendencies may be called the borough superintendencies because they are responsible for operations in all of the academic-comprehensive, vocational-technical, and specialized high schools in their areas. Since this report often compares alternative schools and special programs with all other high schools, these latter schools may be called "high schools in the borough superintendencies" for convenience.

percent) and other administrators (5 percent) also filled out questionnaires.

The survey asked for general information on the range and organization of guidance services in the schools. The survey also asked for information about the types of guidance services currently offered in the schools, the number of counselors and other staff involved, and the caseloads of licensed counselors. Respondents described the organization of their guidance departments, the roles of core administrative and supervisory personnel, and many other aspects of department operations. Finally, respondents described the goals of their guidance departments, and the obstacles to realization of those goals.

Additional data for OREA's evaluation came from interviews with 36 guidance counselors from a representative sample of 18 high schools from all six superintendencies. The sample selection process involved an initial stratification of all regular high schools into four groups based on school size and percentage of at-risk students. Four school variables were used in this grouping process: the percentages of special education students, students with limited English proficiency, students eligible for school lunch programs, and building utilization. The purpose of this stratified sampling was to permit the examination and comparison of schools which were alike in some key features. Four schools were then selected from each sample group--two schools with good attendance rates and two with poor attendance rates. In addition, two alternative schools were

included in the sample.

Evaluators then conducted interviews with two guidance counselors, preferably general education counselors, in each of the 18 high schools in the sample. OREA gathered quantitative and qualitative data on the everyday activities of counselors, and typical guidance processes, such as the assignment of students to counselors, the continuity of counselor-student relationships over time, and the workings of the referral system. The interviews also touched on many of the same issues addressed by the survey, but in this case the information came from counselors as opposed to administrative personnel.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report describes the organization and operation of guidance departments in New York City's public high schools. Chapter II describes the operation of typical guidance departments, the delegation of responsibilities, the process of assigning students to counselors, the referral system, and some general indications of the effectiveness of current practices. Chapter III presents data on the general features of guidance department administration, the numbers and kinds of different guidance personnel working in the schools, and the size of their student caseloads. Chapter IV analyzes the goals of guidance departments, the main obstacles to achieving those goals, and the most significant problems involved in the delivery of guidance services. Chapter V draws conclusions from the foregoing analyses, and makes recommendations based upon the findings of this evaluation.

II. THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF GUIDANCE DEPARTMENTS

DEPARTMENT SUPERVISION

According to survey results, 98 percent of the guidance departments in New York City's academic-comprehensive, vocational-technical, and specialized high schools are overseen by an Assistant Principal/Administration or an Assistant Principal/Pupil Personnel Services (A.P./P.P.S.). All borough superintendencies reported this same basic pattern for the supervision of guidance departments.

In alternative schools and special programs, however, the pattern is markedly different. In more than half of these schools (N=12, 52 percent), someone other than an Assistant Principal is responsible for daily guidance operations. In alternative schools these supervisory personnel include Principals, Family/School Coordinators, and Coordinators of Pupil Personnel Services; in special programs, a project director or site supervisor is likely to oversee guidance activities.

These differences result, in part, from the unique organization of alternative schools, their purposeful experimentation in design and operations, and the relative unavailability of licensed counselors in such schools. An additional factor is the small size of student populations in such schools. Indeed, OREA found that, regardless of whether a school belongs to the Superintendency of Alternative Schools and Special Programs or to one of the other five area superintendencies, schools with fewer students reported more flexible patterns of guidance supervision than did schools with many students. Department organization in

large schools was highly predictable. In fact, all high schools with more than 3,000 students reported that their A.P./P.P.S. had primary responsibility for supervision of guidance activities. By contrast, seven percent of the schools with 1,000 to 2,000 students looked to someone other than the A.P./P.P.S. for daily supervision of guidance services. Moreover, in high schools with fewer than 1,000 students, 20 percent of the guidance departments in the borough superintendencies are overseen by someone other than an A.P./P.P.S.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

Since guidance activities, broadly defined, may take many forms, and may come from diverse quarters of the school community, OREA evaluators asked respondents to describe the involvement of six categories of school personnel in the delivery of guidance services: principals, A.P.s/Organization, A.P.s/Security, A.P.s/P.P.S., A.P.s/Supervision, and Coordinators of Student Affairs (COSAs). Table 1 presents the responses to this question, citywide and by superintendency.

As might be expected, Principals and A.P.s/P.P.S. were most frequently cited as being active participants in guidance. More than 80 percent of all respondents indicated that both of these positions were among those actively involved in guidance in their schools. In fact, 19 percent of high schools in borough superintendencies mentioned only these two positions. Predictably, alternative schools and special programs departed from the overall pattern of responses on each position surveyed. Specifically, they mentioned A.P.s/P.P.S. and A.P.s/Security as

Table 1

Percentage of Respondents Indicating
Active Involvement in Guidance Activities,
Citywide and by Superintendency, 1988-89

Position	Citywide	Superintendencies[a]					
		Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
Principal	93	94	94	91	96	100	84
A.P. for Pupil Personnel Services	85	100	94	91	100	95	44
Coordinator of Student Affairs	44	56	38	43	29	58	40
A.P. for Organization	49	56	50	33	50	53	52
A.P. for Supervision	35	33	31	33	46	37	28
A.P. for Security	24	11	31	33	25	32	12

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

- Principals and Assistant Principals for Pupil Personnel Services were the school administrators most consistently involved in guidance-related activities, citywide.

active participants in guidance delivery roughly half as frequently as did respondents from other superintendencies.

In the area superintendencies, Manhattan respondents indicated that A.P.s/Security were relatively less involved in their schools' guidance activities than in other superintendencies. Brooklyn departments reported fewer A.P.s/Organization as active participants. A.P.s/Supervision were relatively more involved in guidance in Queens schools, and COSAs were particularly active in the Manhattan and BASIS superintendencies.

The precise roles that these school personnel play in guidance activities in the high schools are more difficult to assess. Based on respondents' descriptions of the guidance roles of Principals, A.P.s/P.P.S, A.P.s/Organization, and A.P.s/Supervision, OREA can sketch a general model of the ways in which guidance responsibilities are delegated in public high schools. The role of the A.P./P.P.S., being most complex, will be described last.

Principals were invariably described as being responsible for overall guidance policy, setting the goals and priorities of the school's guidance efforts, and providing leadership and an environment conducive to successful guidance practices. Principals were usually directly involved in allocating funds for guidance services. Many respondents described the principal as overseeing the A.P./P.P.S., who is responsible for daily operations. Some principals also supervised staff development efforts. In some schools, especially small alternative schools, the principal was actively involved in casework. In a very few

other schools, usually in larger schools, "suspension hearings" were a salient aspect of the principal's guidance role.

Assistant principals for Organization played a variety of roles in the delivery of guidance services. They allocated office space, secretarial or other personnel, and in-house resources to the guidance department. In many schools, computerized services seemed to be within the purview of the A.P./Organization: most are directly responsible for school and/or student programming, many oversee the school's attendance office, some manage the administration of standardized tests, and a few do data analysis for the guidance department. Budget, hiring, security, and discipline were also commonly mentioned as responsibilities of the A.P.s/Organization.

Assistant principals for Supervision appeared to play a unique and integral role in school guidance activities. Judging from respondent descriptions, A.P.s/Supervision were key personnel in the coordination of guidance activities with classroom life. They are usually responsible for curriculum development and were frequently consulting with guidance department staff regarding the introduction of guidance-related issues into standard course content. Moreover, A.P.s/Supervision, as the chairpersons of school departments, frequently act as the liaisons between teachers and guidance counselors or A.P.s/P.P.S. Thus, they occupied an important position in the system by which students in need were referred to counselors for help. Other common responsibilities include staff development, college counseling, and keeping the guidance department informed

of individual departmental standards for testing and graduation.

The assistant principals for Pupil Personnel Services, as mentioned earlier, were usually responsible for the day-to-day supervision of guidance services. The precise nature of their responsibilities varies considerably from school to school, but the burden appeared to be a heavy one in all cases. A partial list of typical responsibilities illustrates the point. The A.P.s/P.P.S. often consulted with the principal on guidance planning, supervised all guidance staff, assigned caseloads, ensured compliance with state, city and superintendency mandates, maintained all pupil records, evaluated and placed entering students, coordinated articulation with feeder schools, offered college and career counseling, coordinated job placement services, wrote letters of reference to potential employers, planned extra-curricular activities, issued a guidance handbook and student manual, published an academic honor roll, issued report cards, and coordinated subsequent follow-up with parents. In addition, the A.P.s/P.P.S frequently supervised the attendance office, was responsible for discipline and suspension hearings, maintained student court records, acted as a liaison with community agencies, coordinated referrals to social services agencies, supervised general student welfare services, and issued subway tokens and bus passes.

Although the responsibilities of the A.P.s/P.P.S. may be overrepresented in this study (since more than half of the questionnaires were completed by A.P.s/P.P.S.), it is clear that

they are overburdened. Respondents frequently complained that it had become virtually impossible to meet their obligations satisfactorily.

GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

The sample of 36 guidance counselors interviewed by OREA had been working an average of nine years as counselors, and 8.3 years in the school in which they were currently employed. On average, 68 percent of their time was spent in casework or guidance sessions with students,* with individual estimates ranging from 20 to 95 percent. Administrative duties took up another 15 percent of their working hours, on average, though some respondents reported spending as much as 75 percent of their time on such tasks. Meetings with teachers and administrators accounted for ten percent, and community liaison work another four percent of their time. Another three percent of counselors' time, on average, was spent in other activities, such as job development, coordination of work-study programs, distribution of guidance information, and meetings with other counselors.

OREA found that counselors were required by their guidance departments to meet with assigned students anywhere from one to eight times per term. Most (44 percent) were required to meet with their students at least once per term, while others (31 percent) were obliged to hold six or more such meetings per term.

The actual content of casework and guidance sessions

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*This estimate includes time spent on case-related meetings and paperwork. It should be noted that many respondents report that the time spent on meetings and paperwork severely limits their contact with students.

depended, of course, on student needs, counselor expertise, and the guidance priorities of the particular high school. OREA's evaluation found that, in most cases, the activities of high school guidance counselors reflected the objectives set forth in the Board of Education's Guidance Plan,* but that compliance with these mandates has been only partial.

The 1988-89 Guidance Plan offered high school guidance departments a set of program objectives which integrated New York State Department of Education mandates for guidance with support strategies that have proven effective in New York City public high schools. The Plan called for annual reviews of each student's educational progress and career plans; counseling and instructional services aimed at informing students of, and preparing them for, traditional and nontraditional career opportunities; advisory assistance, especially for students with academic, attendance, or behavioral problems; and the encouragement of parental involvement. The Plan identified individual counseling, group counseling, and classroom instruction sessions as the appropriate forums for these guidance activities.

In interviews with counselors, OREA found that the issues discussed in counseling sessions with individual students generally reflect the B.O.E. mandates outlined above. The five purposes most commonly mentioned for such required meetings were

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*The 1988-89 Guidance Plan was prepared by the Office of Pupil Personnel Services and the Office of Special Education of the Board of Education's Division of High Schools, under the direction of the Superintendent in Charge of Operations and the Office of Access and Compliance.

to discuss vocational planning (61 percent), poor academic performance (56 percent), attendance problems (56 percent), program planning (50 percent), and discipline problems (47 percent). Other meetings with individual students--meetings not necessarily required by the guidance departments involved--were most frequently held to address academic, attendance, or family and personal problems. Finally, the pairs of problems which most frequently occurred together in the caseloads of the 36 counselors interviewed were: attendance and academic problems (42 percent), academic and family/personal problems (22 percent), academic and psychological problems (17 percent), discipline and attendance problems (11 percent), and health and attendance problems (8 percent).

Group guidance sessions took place in nearly all of the 18 high schools represented in the interview sample (N=16, 89 percent), with 81 percent of the counselors reporting that at least some of their students were programmed for such sessions. Thirty-nine percent of respondents, in 61 percent of the schools, indicated that they program all their students for group guidance activities. Counselors address a wide range of issues in these weekly or monthly sessions,* but most reported using the group forum to discuss career, college, or general education questions, or to orient new students to the school. Topical issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse, AIDS, sex, study skills, and socializa-

*Five counselors reported conducting weekly sessions, and six report monthly sessions, representing 38 and 46 percent, respectively, of those who responded to this question.

tion skills, were also mentioned as group guidance themes.

Classroom guidance sessions addressed the same general issues in a different setting. Seventy-eight percent of the counselors interviewed reported conducting classroom guidance sessions, and 19 of these 28 counselors considered them "very important" in their guidance work. Freshman and junior classes were mentioned most often as the recipients of such instructional guidance. Classroom sessions for seniors were reported somewhat less frequently, and for sophomores in very few cases. Nearly half the counselors who responded to this question reported conducting classroom guidance sessions at least once a month; 25 percent held such sessions three or four times per week.

COMMUNICATION OF GUIDANCE ISSUES

In order to assess intra-departmental communications, and the cohesiveness of high school guidance departments as operating units, OREA asked survey respondents how often their guidance departments met as a group. Citywide, guidance departments in most schools reported meeting at least twice a month (67 percent), with 25 percent meeting once or twice a week. Meetings were more frequent in some superintendencies: more than three-fourths of the guidance departments in the BASIS, Brooklyn, and Alternative Schools and Special Programs superintendencies reported meeting at least twice a month. Moreover, the guidance staffs in Alternative Schools and Special Programs met once or twice a week in 44 percent of the cases. The Bronx superintendency registered the lowest figures, with 56 percent of its

guidance departments reporting only one meeting a month.

At these meetings, school guidance personnel were likely to discuss a range of issues including, most often, plans for school-wide guidance activities, guidance and administration issues, departmental objectives, upgrading counselors' skills, and other guidance and faculty matters.* Articulation with the high schools' feeder schools, departmental procedures for case management, the implementation of superintendency and/or Board of Education policies, individual student cases, and curricular matters were also frequently cited as topics of discussion in department meetings.**

Who actually attended these meetings was not immediately apparent, since OREA found that guidance departments differed as to which guidance staff were considered bona-fide members of the department. For example, 97 and 93 percent of bilingual and general education counselors, respectively, were thought of by respondents as guidance department members. By contrast, only 89 and 63 percent of supportive services counselors and special education counselors, respectively, were included. In other words, it is not clear precisely how guidance priorities and plans were communicated to relevant guidance personnel. Some departments probably communicated necessary information directly

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*At least 85 percent of respondents from all schools said that these five topics were likely to be discussed in department meetings.

**These responses were cited by 75 to 84 percent of respondents, city-wide.

to their staff in general monthly or weekly meetings, while in others a few guidance personnel attended such meetings and then passed the information on, formally or informally, to the rest of the guidance staff.

The lines of communication from administrators to guidance personnel were apparently effective in transmitting guidance policies and procedures. For example, 72 percent of guidance department administrators surveyed and 80 percent of the counselors interviewed agreed that their departments' goals and priorities were clearly defined. However, it was not clear whether department organization facilitated communication of problems and suggestions up the hierarchy from counselors to administrators, or horizontally--between counselors. Moreover, interactions between guidance counselors and teachers, who had more contact with students than any other school personnel, were often indirect, being channelled through Assistant Principals for Supervision.

In most cases, survey respondents indicated that their guidance departments were not troubled by lack of communication or tensions between guidance personnel. Seventy-four percent of administrators surveyed said that "lack of communication between counselors and administrators" was not a problem, and 71 percent indicated that "tensions between teachers and counselors" was not a problem in the delivery of guidance services. These data do not reveal, however, the extent of communications up the hierarchy or horizontally between counselors and teachers. Communi-

cation and interaction may be relatively tension-free because they are harmonious or because they are infrequent.

Counselors were less sanguine than administrators about the state of intra-departmental communications. Fourteen percent of counselors (as compared with 2 percent of administrators) felt there was a serious problem in the lack of communication between administrators and counselors. Similarly, 11 percent of counselors (as compared with 2 percent of administrators) indicated that tensions between teachers and counselors were a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services.

OTHER LINKAGES

Of course, the influence of guidance-related plans and priorities is not confined solely to formal guidance department activities. As mentioned previously, at the administrative level, linkages between the guidance department and other school departments can further the school's overall guidance goals. For example, A.P.s/Supervision often acted as intermediaries between classroom teachers and the A.P./P.P.S to refer students in need of assistance, or to introduce guidance issues into everyday classroom life.

Similarly, guidance counselors had regular, formalized communication with other school and community groups. Such interactions helped introduce guidance concerns to a wider audience, and provided a broader base of resources upon which students and counselors could draw for support.

OREA found that counselors in 95 percent of the high schools

in borough superintendencies, and in 80 percent of alternative high schools and special programs, served on school or community-school committees outside their own departments. More than two-thirds of survey respondents reported that guidance personnel participated in their school's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan committees, or were active in school-wide programs on substance abuse and/or child abuse. Attendance committees, administrative/advisory committees, incentives and scholarship programs, and a variety of health awareness programs were also frequently mentioned as activities in which guidance counselors were involved.

Linkages between schools and community-based organizations (C.B.O.s) are another avenue for communicating guidance concerns to a wider audience, and provide schools with additional resources for referrals, job development, technical assistance, and other services. OREA evaluators found that formalized linkages with colleges were the most common type of school-C.B.O. association. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported such high school-college linkages, with a median of two linkages per school. Seventy-two percent of schools reported linkages with businesses and/or industries in the community (median = 2). Some high schools were also paired with public agencies (55 percent; median = 1), private agencies (51 percent; median = 1), and voluntary organizations (36 percent; median = 1). Respondents were not queried about the precise nature of these linkages, but 28 percent indicated that the shortage of agencies to which stu-

students could be referred for further help was a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services.

CASELOAD ASSIGNMENTS AND REFERRALS

Caseload Assignments

OREA asked the counselors how students were initially assigned to them. More than half indicated that assignments were made by grade level.* Some counselors (19 percent) reported that other school personnel assigned students to them, or that students from specific classes made up their caseloads (16 percent). In a very few cases (less than 8 percent) students referred themselves, or were assigned randomly.

Once assigned, many students remained with the same counselor throughout high school. Such continuity in the counselor-student relationship is an important component of quality guidance services, and was a major rationale behind the recommendations for reform made in the 1972 Agenda for Action. The issue continues to concern counselors today. One of the survey respondents noted that "we need to know the whole student, over time." Another mentioned that one of their program goals was "to see that each kid is known well by someone."

Fifteen of the 36 counselors interviewed reported that the students assigned to them stayed with them through high school, and another five mentioned that this was true for some of their

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*The counselors interviewed were mostly general education counselors, whose caseloads are drawn from the entire student population. The caseloads of other counselors who serve more specialized student needs may be assigned differently, and are subject to specific mandates regarding caseload size and student eligibility.

students. Forty-four percent of the respondents, however, said that they did not retain the same students from year to year.

The Referral System

Several survey respondents used the term "ladder of referral" to describe the system by which students were directed to specific guidance personnel for help with special problems. The term may have originated in the 1972 Agenda for Action recommendations that clear lines of decision-making and easily identifiable referral procedures be instituted in high school guidance departments. Whatever the roots of the term, the system it describes is an integral part of the delivery of guidance services.

To illuminate the referral process, OREA asked counselors how they learned of a student's special need for guidance consultation in ten different areas: college planning, health problems, discipline problems, attendance problems, drug or alcohol problems, program planning, vocational planning, poor academic performance, psychotherapy, and job-related problems.

"Student refers self" was the most frequent response overall, and especially in the areas of vocational and career counseling. Teachers and administrators referred students almost as frequently as students referred themselves; moreover, these referrals were related to issues of student health and behavior. Parents were the third most likely source of referrals overall.*

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*To make these assessments, OREA counted each time a potential referral source was mentioned in each of the ten guidance categories queried. The totals offer a rough gauge of how important each referral source is to the counselors. "Student refers self" was mentioned 182 times; teachers or administrators, 179 times; parents, 144 times; and other guidance staff, 86 times.

Students most often referred themselves to counselors for help with college, vocational or program planning, and with job-related problems. Self-referrals were also common for health problems, poor academic performance, and psychotherapy.

Teachers and administrators were mentioned as the primary source of referrals for academic and attendance problems, substance abuse and other health problems, and psychotherapy. In many cases, they were the first to contact counselors to discuss an individual student's program plan.

OREA found that very often parents referred their children for counseling on a variety of issues: college and vocational planning, health, discipline and attendance problems, program planning, and psychotherapy. On average, parents were not notably involved in referring their children to counselors for help with drug or alcohol problems, poor academic performance, or job-related problems.

Other guidance staff were the primary source of referrals for discipline problems, and were often among those who contacted counselors about students with health, attendance, and substance-abuse problems. In addition, school records helped identify many students with attendance and academic problems.

Once referred, students received different kinds of assistance depending upon the nature of the problem and the resources available. OREA asked guidance counselors how they typically managed cases of attendance or academic problems referred to them. Eighty-nine percent reported that, for attendance

problems, they usually held follow-up conferences with teachers and/or parents, including home visits. Eleven counselors (30 percent) mentioned that they might schedule individual interviews with the student involved.

Counselors responded to students' academic problems with a greater variety of resources and techniques than they did to attendance problems. Fourteen counselors (39 percent) indicated that they regularly scheduled follow-up meetings with parents and/or teachers in cases where students had special academic needs. Other frequently mentioned responses to students' special academic needs included reprogramming (31 percent), individual interviews (31 percent), consultations with faculty members (28 percent), and academic counseling (22 percent).

However, the most frequent response--one reported by 16 counselors (44 percent)--was that they referred students with academic problems to other guidance counselors or guidance staff, administrators, or community-based organizations. Similarly, students in need of psychological counseling, students with problems outside the counselor's area of expertise, and students of limited English proficiency with specialized needs were often referred to other resources inside or outside the school.

In sum, counselors worked with students who had been assigned to them and/or with students referred to them from a variety of sources. Often they themselves referred certain stu-students to still other guidance resources in the school or community--to some other rung on the "ladder of referral." What

happens from there is a matter of primary importance, but falls outside the scope of this report.

STUDENT NEEDS

A central question in any evaluation of guidance activities must be how well-matched guidance services are to actual student needs. OREA asked survey respondents to indicate how many of their students had a critical need for each of seven kinds of guidance services: alcohol or drug abuse counseling, other kinds of health counseling, absentee follow-up, personal counseling, crisis intervention, family counseling, and academic counseling.

Table 2 summarizes the respondents' answers, documenting the percentage of schools citywide and in each superintendency which indicated that more than 50 percent of their students had a critical need for counseling of a certain type.

Respondents from all superintendencies agreed overwhelmingly that academic and personal counseling were the two most urgent needs in their schools. Seventy-three percent of all respondents reported that more than half their students were critically in need of academic counseling. Even more compelling is the fact that virtually half the respondents (49 percent) indicated that more than 80 percent of their students urgently needed academic counseling.

Respondents ranked personal counseling as the second most pressing need in the city's public high schools, with 63 percent reporting that more than half their students had a critical need for such services. Moreover, 30 percent of respondents citywide

Table 2

Percentage of Schools Where More than Half the Students were in Serious Need of Particular Guidance Services, Citywide and by Superintendency, 1988-89

	Citywide	Superintendencies[a]					
		Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
Alcohol or Drug Abuse Counseling	20	22	19	--	4	11	56
Other Health Counseling	26	33	44	5	13	16	48
Absentee Follow-up 30	30	39	38	10	4	32	60
Personal Counseling	63	61	88	48	42	63	80
Crisis Intervention	15	--	19	10	--	16	40
Family Counseling	30	28	31	19	8	26	60
Academic Counseling	73	61	81	57	67	95	80

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

- Respondents identified academic counseling and personal counseling as the most acute student needs, citywide.
- Crisis intervention and alcohol or drug counseling were identified as the least acute student needs, citywide.

indicated that more than 80 percent of their students urgently needed personal counseling services.

Table 2 also shows that at least 50 percent of the students in more than one-quarter of the surveyed public high schools need family counseling, absentee follow-up, and health counseling services. Alcohol and drug counseling, and crisis intervention needs, though significant, affect relatively fewer students citywide.

In addition, OREA found noteworthy differences among the six superintendencies in these several categories of counseling needs. Respondents from high schools in the Bronx and from alternative high schools and special programs indicated that a far greater percentage of their students were seriously in need of a wider variety of counseling services than was the case in other superintendencies.

The data from alternative schools and special programs are particularly compelling. For every type of counseling service that OREA investigated, the proportion of respondents from alternative schools and special programs reporting a majority of students with urgent needs for such services was far above the city average, often double or triple the rates in the borough superintendencies.

The situation is also critical in the Bronx. Respondents indicated that personal counseling is a critical need for a majority of students in nearly 90 percent of public high schools in that borough. In addition, academic counseling needs are acute. Eighty-one percent of Bronx respondents indicated that

half the students in their schools badly needed academic counseling. Moreover, 63 percent estimated that more than 80 percent of the students were in critical need of such academic counseling. Relative to citywide averages, absentee follow-up and health counseling needs were also exceptionally pronounced in the Bronx.

Relative to citywide averages, a greater proportion of respondents from Manhattan reported that the majority of their students needed absentee follow-up, health counseling, and alcohol or drug abuse counseling. In the BASIS superintendency, 95 percent of respondents reported that at least half of their students had a critical need for academic counseling--the highest proportion recorded from any superintendency.

The data from the other borough superintendencies generally clustered around city norms or revealed less acute needs. Brooklyn and Queens schools reported relatively low rates of student needs in all counseling categories. Nevertheless, the need for personal and academic counseling in these superintendencies is still quite high.

When guidance counselors were interviewed about their views on the severity of these same student needs, OREA evaluators found that they generally concurred with the estimates of department administrators, which have been detailed above. Both counselors and administrators agreed that academic counseling and personal counseling were the areas of greatest need. However, there were some interesting differences in the responses of

counselors and administrators on these and other issues.

For example, although 58 percent of the guidance counselors interviewed estimated that most of their students had a critical need for academic counseling, the percentage of similar responses was much higher among the principals and assistant principals who responded to the survey questionnaire (73 percent). Perhaps counselors, in their day-to-day contact with students, believed that students' academic problems might best be addressed by other kinds of guidance services.

Personal counseling was recognized by the majority of both guidance counselors (61 percent) and administrators (63 percent) as a critical need affecting most students. Counselors, however, also reported higher estimates of the need for attendance follow-up and family counseling than did administrators. Forty percent of the counselors interviewed by OREA evaluators indicated that most of their students had a critical need for absentee follow-up, and 37 percent felt the same way about the need for family counseling. In contrast, 30 percent of the administrators responded similarly in these two areas.

In addition to these data on the most urgently needed guidance services in the schools, OREA evaluators investigated the degree to which these critical needs were being met. OREA asked respondents to estimate the percentage of students with serious needs who were actually receiving relevant guidance services. The results are not encouraging.

OREA evaluators found that, in the majority of schools, five

out of seven of the guidance services specifically investigated in this part of the study were not being delivered to most of the students who seriously needed them. The biggest discrepancy was reported for family counseling, with 78 percent of respondents indicating that most of the students in serious need of family counseling services did not receive them. Similar findings were reported for substance abuse counseling and health counseling by 72 percent of the survey respondents. Only personal and academic counseling, the two guidance services identified earlier in this report as the most serious needs in high schools, were being delivered to most of the students who needed them in a majority of schools.

Table 3 presents data on the percentage of respondents, citywide and by superintendency, who indicated that more than 50 percent of the students with serious needs were not receiving relevant services. It should be understood that most of these guidance needs, with the exception of college, academic and (to some extent) personal counseling, are not ones for which schools have traditionally been responsible. In recent years, however, the reality of students' changing needs has compelled schools to assume a variety of new roles. These newer guidance services are less well developed than the traditional ones.

In addition, it should be noted that the guidance counselors interviewed by OREA were much more optimistic than guidance administrators about the percent of students who were receiving the guidance services they needed. Both groups agreed that the

Table 3

Percentage of Respondents Who Said That Less Than Half of the Students with Serious Needs were Receiving Guidance Services, 1988-89

		Superintendencies[a]					
	Overall	Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
Alcohol or Drug Counseling	72	78	60	81	78	59	71
Other Health Counseling	72	78	67	86	78	47	71
Absentee Follow-up	51	56	29	62	65	29	50
Personal Counseling	46	56	33	52	50	35	46
Crisis Intervention	53	61	33	52	57	41	63
Family Counseling	78	67	73	95	79	72	78
Academic Counseling	30	22	27	33	42	12	38

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

- Seventy-eight percent of respondents indicated that most students in need of family counseling do not receive such counseling.

three most pressing areas of unmet student needs were family, health, and substance abuse counseling; however, counselors and administrators ranked these needs differently and disagreed markedly on the percent of students receiving needed services. For example, at least 50 percent of the counselors reported that more than half of their students were receiving the specific guidance services they needed for every type of student counseling need investigated, with the exception of health counseling (45 percent). Administrators, on the other hand, gave similar responses only for personal and academic counseling. Moreover, for every type of counseling service, at least one-third of the counselors reported that more than 80 percent of their students received the specific services they needed. In contrast, only for academic counseling did more than one-third of administrators indicate that 80 percent of students received necessary services.

There are some notable differences among the superintendencies on this issue. Table 3 reveals that, in every category of guidance service investigated, the Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn superintendencies had a greater percentage of schools reporting serious unmet student needs, relative to citywide averages. The Bronx and BASIS superintendencies, on the other hand, showed very strong tendencies in the opposite direction--for every kind of guidance service, a lower percentage of schools in those superintendencies reported unmet student needs, relative to citywide averages. Uncharacteristically, alternative schools and special programs reported percentages similar to citywide

averages in all categories, except that the majority of students who needed crisis intervention and academic counseling were not being served in 63 and 38 percent, respectively, of the alternative schools and special programs reporting.

It is interesting to note that the very guidance needs which respondents judged to be most widespread (academic and personal counseling) were the only two needs that most schools believed were being met for more than half their students. This may mean that schools are effectively mobilizing their guidance resources to address the two most serious problems the schools face. However, it may also be that these problems are the most readily identifiable, and that schools most clearly perceive those needs which they are best able to deal with.

Another way to evaluate student needs and the adequacy of the guidance departments' response to them is to look only at the schools where particular needs are most acute and find out how many effectively deliver the services their students need.

Table 4 presents data on the percentage of schools where more than half the students were reported to need a certain kind of service and where less than half of those students received the guidance they needed. It must be kept in mind that these data do not reflect the most serious needs citywide, but those needs which are most seriously unmet--those needs which our schools are least able to cope with effectively when they emerge.

Table 4 shows that for schools where alcohol or drug abuse counseling, other kinds of health counseling, and family

Table 4

Percentage of Schools Citywide Where
Half the Students were in Serious Need of Guidance Services
but Less Than Half Received the Help They Needed, 1988-89

Guidance Service	# Schools with Serious Needs	# Schools where Needs Unmet	Percent Schools with Serious Unmet Needs
Alcohol or Drug Abuse Counseling	23	16	70
Other Health Counseling	32	21	66
Absentee Follow-up	37	14	38
Personal Counseling	75	32	43
Crisis Intervention	18	7	39
Family Counseling	36	24	67
Academic Counseling	88	20	23

- Alcohol or drug abuse counseling, family counseling and health counseling are serious needs that are unmet in the highest percentage of city high schools.
- Academic counseling is the guidance service that most consistently reaches those students who need it.

counseling were considered very pressing needs, more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated that most of their at-risk students were not receiving the help they needed. Personal counseling services were also relatively inadequate. Of all the guidance services investigated here, academic counseling most consistently reached the students who needed it.

Family and health counseling services may be underdeveloped because they represent relatively new orientations in guidance practices. Substance abuse counseling, however, has been a component of high school guidance programs for many years. The wide gap reported here between student needs and the delivery of substance abuse counseling may indicate that high school counseling resources are being overwhelmed by the current drug abuse epidemic, and/or that there may be a lack of communication between the SPARK* counselors, who are responsible for much of the substance abuse counseling, and the guidance administrators who responded to this survey.

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*School Prevention of Addiction through Rehabilitation and Knowledge. There are some 120 SPARK counselors working in 100 city high schools (82 percent).

III. GUIDANCE PERSONNEL AND CASELOADS

LICENSED COUNSELORS

Licensed counselors are the backbone of the guidance departments in our public high schools. OREA found that all of the surveyed high schools in the borough superintendencies had at least one licensed counselor on staff, with numbers ranging from a minimum of two in a school of 2,600 students,* to a maximum of 20 in a school of 2,400 students.** Seven alternative schools and special programs reported no licensed counselors on staff. A few of these schools mentioned that the category designation was not relevant to their guidance delivery set-up.

All 856 guidance counselors in the surveyed public high schools have the same basic license, though the bilingual counselor license necessitates an additional language component. Furthermore, some counselors have specialized knowledge and training which may recommend them for assignment as special education counselors, counselors in the Dropout Prevention Initiative (D.P.I.), supportive services counselors, or college counselors.

A counselor's assignment depends on various factors, including the decisions of individual principals as to how monies will be allocated for guidance services; the characteristics and needs of student populations; the counselor's training; the

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*Stuyvesant High School, a specialized high school in Manhattan.

*New Dorp High School, an academic-comprehensive high school in Staten Island.

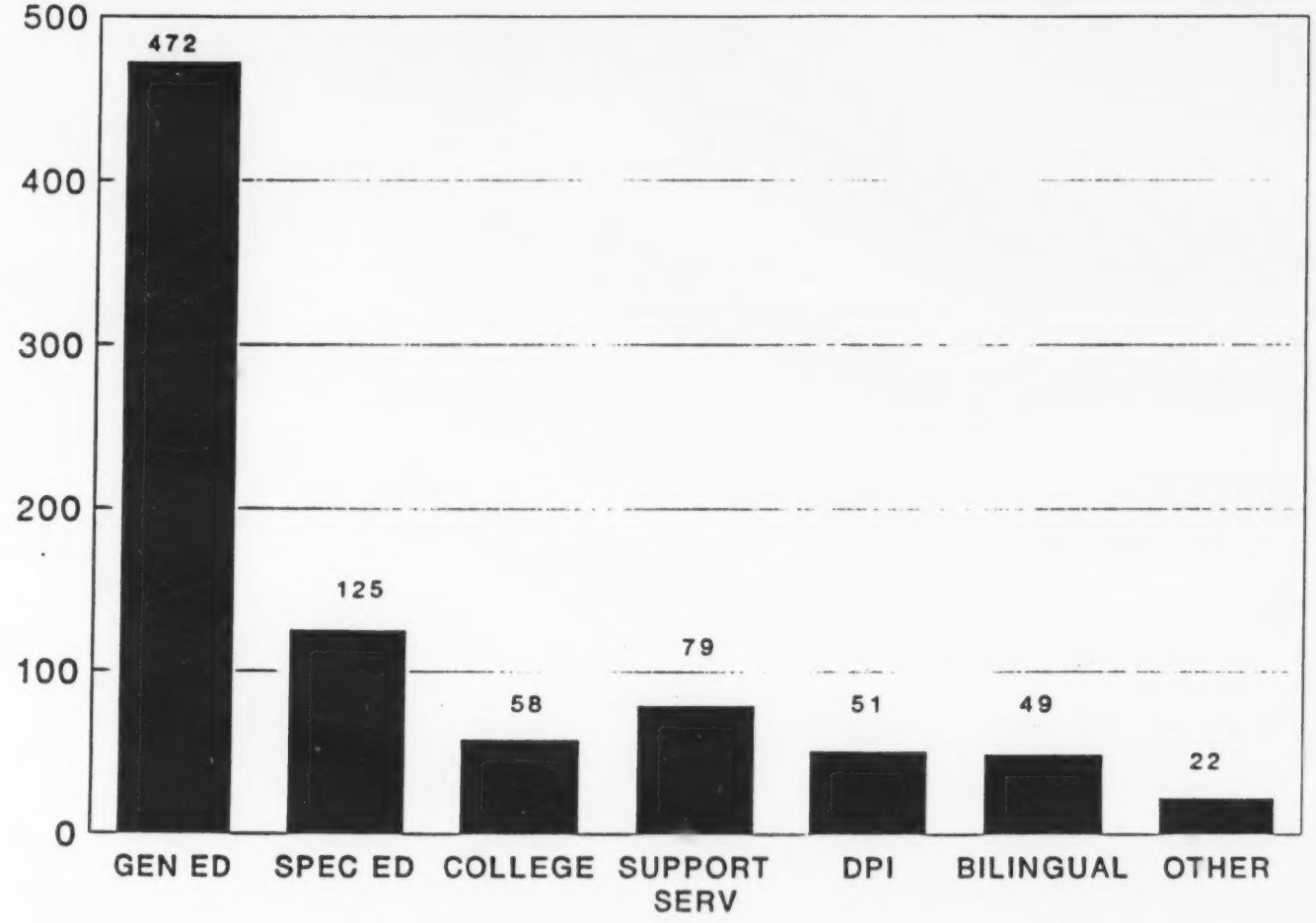
source of funds which pay for the position; state and federal mandates on caseloads for certain kinds of counselors; and the guidance goals and organization of individual schools. Figure 1 illustrates the total number of counselors of each type in the 122 schools surveyed. Figure 2 illustrates, for each type of licensed counselor, the percentage of high schools that have such counselors.

OREA evaluators found that general education counselors were the most numerous category; 55 percent of all licensed counselors were designated as such. They were present in all high schools in the borough superintendencies, and in 54 percent of the alternative high schools and special programs. Table 5 reports the data, citywide and by superintendency, on the total number of counselors of each type in the surveyed public high schools. Table 6 presents, for each type of counselor, the percentage of high schools that had such counselors working in their schools, citywide and by superintendency.

General education counselors were paid out of general tax-levy monies, and had primary responsibility for attending to the overall needs of most of the city's high school students. Their work typically included student programming, vocational guidance, and academic, behavioral, and personal counseling. OREA found that there was an average of one general education counselor for every 480 students in the system. Individual caseloads ranged from six to 800, and the median citywide was 350 students per counselor. Table 7 gives the median caseloads for all types of

Figure 1

Number of Licensed Counselors Citywide by
Type of Counselor



37

45

46

Figure 2

Percent of High Schools Citywide with Licensed Guidance Counselors by Type of Counselor

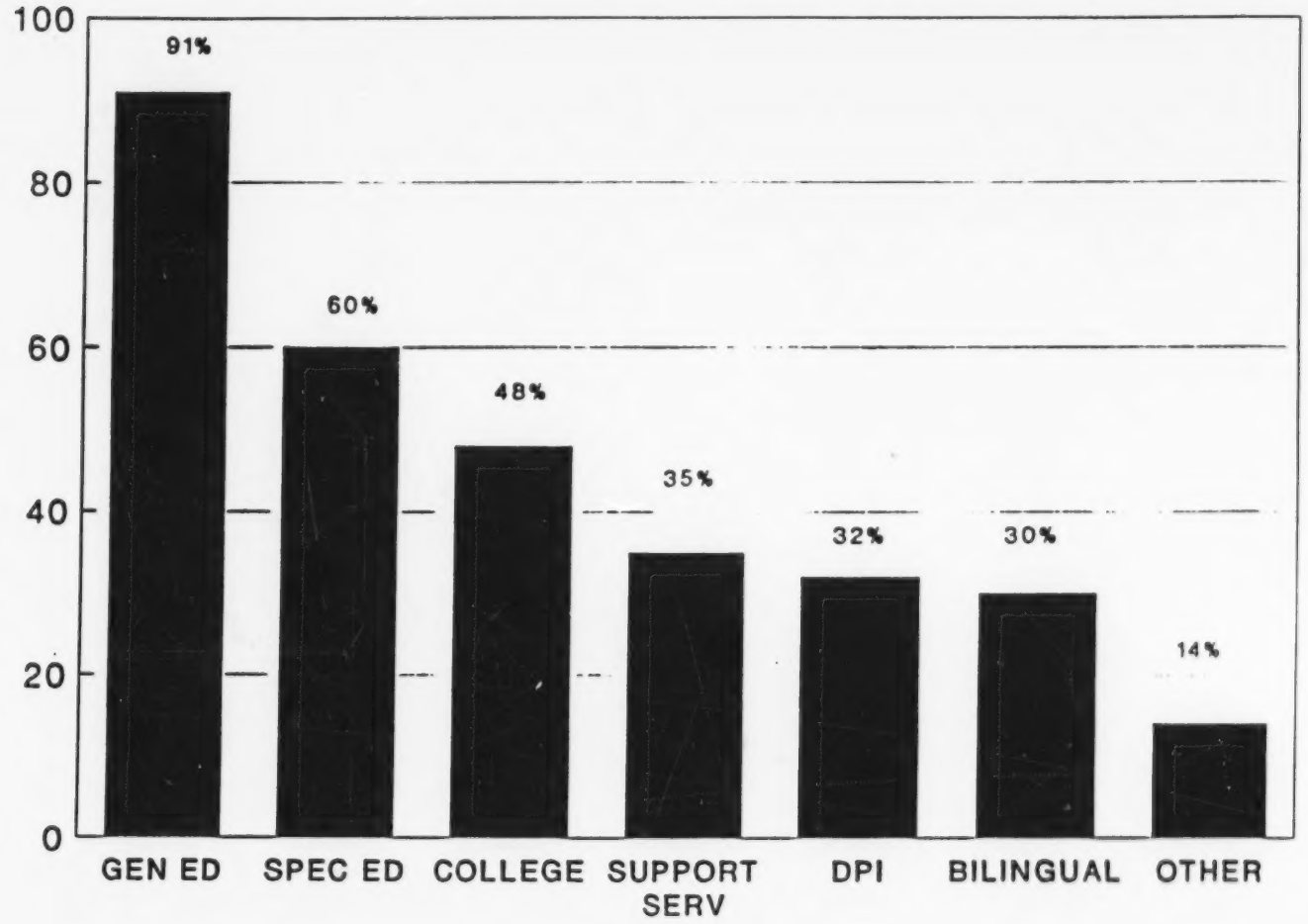


Table 5

Number and Type of Licensed Counselors
Citywide and by Superintendency, 1988-89

Type of Counselor	Citywide	Superintendencies[a]					
		Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
General Education	472	62	88	116	99	85	22
Special Education	125	14	20	20	20	46	5
College	58	6	8	16	18	9	1
Supportive Services	79	15	27	18	3	12	4
D.P.I.	51	11	16	4	7	12	1
Bilingual	49	6	16	5	10	4	8
Other[b]	22	0	5	1	4	8	4
Total	856	114	180	180	161	176	45

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

[b]"Other Counselors" include licensed counselors who work in special programs, such as the College Bound or College Discovery Programs.

- There were 856 licensed counselors in the 122 high schools surveyed.
- The Brooklyn superintendency reported the most general education counselors. The BASIS superintendency reported the most special education counselors; the Bronx superintendency reported the most bilingual, D.P.I., and supportive services counselors; and the Queens superintendency reported the most college counselors.

Table 6

Percentage of High Schools with Licensed Counselors, Citywide and by Superintendency, 1988-89

Type of Counselor	Citywide	Superintendencies[a]					
		Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
General Education	91	100	100	100	100	100	54
Special Education	60	41	76	80	71	85	13
College	48	35	47	80	75	45	4
Supportive Services	35	47	82	60	4	30	8
D.P.I.	32	41	65	20	25	50	4
Bilingual	30	35	47	25	38	20	21
Other	14	0	29	5	13	20	17

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

- All schools in the borough superintendencies reported having general education counselors on staff.

Table 7

Median Caseloads of Licensed Counselors, Citywide and by Superintendency, 1988-89

Type of Counselor	Citywide	Superintendencies[a]					
		Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
General Education	350	400	300	320	400	350	150
Special Education	84	60	105	116	100	78	19
College	403	416	210	263	500	600	150
Supportive Services	213	225	188	250	200	500	30
D.P.I.	200	150	188	250	200	200	100
Bilingual	307	300	300	340	425	350	140

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

- In the borough superintendencies, nearly all general education, bilingual, and special education counselors had caseloads of more than 300 students.

counselors, citywide and by superintendency.

Special education counselors were also funded through local and state tax revenues; they provided services for a subset of students identified as having special needs. Some of the criteria for selecting these students were mandated, others dictated by school circumstances and the discretion of those responsible at the local level. Special education counselors were directed to meet with their student-clients more often than were general education counselors, and reduced caseloads are mandated. OREA found that the median caseload for special education counselors citywide was 87, with special education counselors in the borough superintendencies responsible for about 100 students each. Some schools reported that their special education counselors actually managed caseloads of as few as two or as many as 600 students. There were 125 special education counselors in the 122 high schools surveyed, a ratio of slightly more than one per school; but, as seen in Table 6, only 60 percent of city high schools actually had counselors assigned to work in their special education programs.

College counselors are those licensed counselors responsible for providing all students with the information, counseling, and other procedural and financial-aid guidelines necessary to make the difficult transition from high school to college. College counselors are paid through general tax-levy funding. Analysis of survey results revealed that seven percent of all counselors

are assigned to such positions, totalling 58 counselors distributed through less than half the schools. Their caseloads averaged 392, with a median of over 400 citywide. Precise numbers, however, are difficult to obtain since many respondents reported caseloads of "the entire senior class," or "the junior and senior classes" in schools with thousands of students.

Bilingual counselors were also paid for with monies allocated from available tax revenues. These counselors have the requisite language facility to provide a full range of guidance services to students of limited English proficiency. OREA found that there were 49 bilingual counselors working in 37 of the surveyed high schools (30 percent), comprising six percent of all licensed counselors, citywide. Their caseloads averaged 297 with a median of 307 citywide. Some respondents, however, reported that their bilingual counselors carried caseloads of as many as 700 students.

Students at-risk of dropping out of school were assigned to counselors working in the D.P.I. programs. Students who have been absent 20 times during the previous term, or 40 times during the previous school year, for example, make up the caseloads of D.P.I. counselors. School principals make the decision to allocate some of the money available to their schools for guidance services to provide more intensive counseling for these students. There were 51 such counselors working in 39 of the high schools surveyed (32 percent). Their caseloads ranged from one to 530 students, with an average of 191. The median caseload

was 200 students, citywide.

Finally, OREA found that 79 of New York City's licensed high school counselors are assigned as supportive services counselors. These counselors sometimes have specialized training, and are made available to the high schools through federal Chapter I monies allocated on the basis of the number of students eligible for subsidized school lunch programs in the school, and the number of families in the school area who receive Aid to Families of Dependent Children (A.F.D.C.) funds. These supportive services counselors are supplemental counselors working on a sustained basis in the schools, augmenting the services provided by general education counselors. Usually other licensed counselors provide general guidance services to Chapter I-eligible students, and some of these students are also assigned to Supportive Services counselors for further specialized counseling. Caseloads of 200 students were found to be the norm citywide, though some schools reported that their supportive services counselors were responsible for as many as 800 students. Thirty-nine New York City public high schools (35 percent of the total surveyed) had licensed counselors assigned through the Chapter I program. They represented nine percent of all licensed counselors working in the surveyed public high schools.

CASELOADS

Excessive caseloads are a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services, as reported by well over half the respondents citywide. The median caseloads for six different kinds of

licensed counselors are reported in Table 7.

In 1959, James Conant suggested the ratio of 250 students for every guidance counselor as an ideal to be pursued nationwide.* This 250:1 ratio was also recommended in the 1972 Agenda for Action, and appeared in the comments of several respondents to the present study.

OREA evaluators found that only 17 percent (N=79) of New York City's general education counselors currently had caseloads of 250 or fewer students. Thirty-three percent (N=281) of licensed counselors of all types had caseloads smaller than the ideal of 250. General education, bilingual and college counselors averaged caseloads of 354, 297, and 392 students, respectively. Moreover, most of the other specialized counselors (special education, D.P.I., and supportive services) carried caseloads much higher than those supposedly mandated.

More important than these numbers is the question of whether high school students actually have access to guidance services of sufficient quality and frequency to help reverse the current high failure and dropout rates. OREA evaluators found that even though 33 percent of all counselors had caseloads of fewer than 250 students, 59 percent of survey respondents cited excessive caseloads as a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services. This may indicate that 250 students per counselor, an

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*Conant, James, The American High School (1959), cited in Leslie Hendrickson, "The Evaluation of Guidance and Counseling in an Oregon School District," (Eugene, Oregon: Office of Research, Analysis and Planning, Eugene School District, 1982.)

ideal first suggested for 1959 suburban high schools, is too high a ratio to cope successfully with conditions in contemporary New York City public high schools.

This observation is further validated by the fact that the 36 counselors interviewed by OREA evaluators gave even higher estimates of caseloads than did department administrators. Counselors reported caseloads ranging from 111 to 1,700, with a median of 400. Moreover, 71 percent of these 36 counselors considered large caseloads to be a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services.

GUIDANCE ASSOCIATES

In addition to asking about licensed counselors, OREA evaluators queried respondents about 20 other categories of guidance personnel working in city high schools. These included such varied personnel as grade advisors, clerical assistants and aides, house coordinators, family assistants and secretaries. Table 8 shows the distribution of the 20 types of school personnel doing guidance-related work, citywide and by superintendency.

Some of these guidance associates assist the core guidance staff with part-time clerical and advisement services, while others may be full-time personnel with special training. A substantial proportion are teachers assigned to one or more periods of guidance-related work per day.

School policies on the issue of who should be responsible for delivery of the bulk of guidance services--full-time licensed

Table 8

Number and Type of Guidance Associates,
Citywide and by Superintendency, 1988-89

Type of Counselor	Citywide	Superintendencies[a]					
		Man.	Bx.	Bk.	Q.	Ba.	Alt.
Grade Advisor	669	80	38	49	113	88	301[b]
College Advisor	69	15	8	7	14	11	14
SPARK Counselor	120	16	21	22	29	24	8
Family Assistant	307	34	77	54	29	63	50
School/Neighborhood Worker	41	10	1	10	5	5	10
Employment Counselor	40	7	8	5	12	8	0
Health Counselor	44	10	5	5	10	8	6
Houses Coordinator	259	30	87	27	38	54	23
Attendance Teacher	119	19	20	20	24	19	17
Social Worker	61	8	10	7	6	12	18
LYFE Social Worker	26	2	3	0	2	8	11
Student Retrieval Worker	6	3	1	0	0	0	2
Special Education Social Worker	74	18	19	13	12	6	6
Special Education Psychologist	108	19	19	17	22	21	10
Special Education Evaluator	109	18	19	18	20	25	9
E.R.S. Social Worker	93	15	15	16	20	19	8
Employment Advisor	54	5	3	12	3	10	21
Career Advisor	36	3	1	7	6	9	10
Secretary	284	36	34	85	63	43	23
Clerical	373	40	34	148	57	55	39
TOTALS	2,892	388	423	522	485	488	586

[a] Abbreviations are as follows: Man. = Manhattan, Bx. = Bronx, Bk. = Brooklyn, Q = Queens, Ba = BASIS, and Alt. = Alternative

[b] Some respondents from alternative schools and special programs indicated that all their teachers functioned as grade advisors. Thus, the high numbers on this item in such schools.

- Grade Advisors, Clerical personnel, Family Assistants, Secretaries, Houses Coordinators, SPARK Counselors, and Attendance Teachers are the seven most numerous types of school personnel assisting in guidance-related work.

counselors, or teachers and others working part-time in a variety of advisement and other capacities--have changed considerably over the years. A 1974 study,* for example, concluded that 80 percent of guidance services were delivered by 3,000 part-time, often underqualified personnel, and recommended that this "fragmentation of services" be redressed by instituting stricter licensing requirements and increasing the number of licensed counselors.

Many schools responded by hiring more licensed counselors to take over the varied responsibilities of several part-time grade advisors and other personnel. Sometimes called "omnibus counseling," this system aimed at delivering a comprehensive set of guidance services to a limited number of students from one clearly identifiable source. In the last 15 years, the number of licensed counselors has more than doubled, while the total number of guidance associates has probably decreased slightly. However, in this study OREA did not ask these guidance associates about the frequency or nature of their guidance activities, so it is impossible to estimate their total contribution to the delivery of guidance services.

OREA found that the most widespread categories of guidance associates in the public high schools included attendance teachers (N=119), who worked in nearly 90 percent of all schools; SPARK Counselors (N=120), who provided substance abuse counseling in 100 of the 122 schools surveyed (82 percent); social workers

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*Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance, Patterns for High School Guidance (New York: Board of Education, 1974).

(N=74), psychologists (N=108), and evaluators (N=109) who worked in the special education programs of one-half to three-quarters of city high schools; grade advisors (N=669) who worked in 75 percent of all schools, the most numerous category of guidance associates; and family assistants (N=307) who worked in 87 of the 122 schools surveyed (87 percent). In addition, 284 secretaries and 373 clerical aides and assistants provided indispensable service to guidance activities citywide.

PEER TUTORS AND PEER MENTORS

Ninety-two percent of all schools in borough superintendencies reportedly had peer tutoring programs, with a median of 11 tutors. Only 46 percent of alternative schools and special programs had peer tutoring programs. Most of these schools had eight or more tutors, representing a more favorable tutor-tutee ratio than in the larger schools of the borough superintendencies.

Peer mentoring programs existed in 55 percent of high schools in the borough superintendencies and 43 percent of alternative high schools and special programs. In all types of schools, the median number of student mentors was 20. Again, although less than half the alternative schools and special programs had student-mentors, in those that did the program was probably a more significant component of school life than in other high schools, given the more favorable mentor-student ratio in the smaller schools.

No data are available on the nature or frequency of peer

mentor and peer tutor activities. Such data would be necessary for assessing the overall effectiveness of such programs. In many schools, for example, student mentors were active only during orientation sessions at the beginning of the school year.

IV. GOALS AND OBSTACLES

In both interviews and surveys, OREA evaluators asked counselors and administrators to describe the goals of their guidance activities, and the problems and obstacles they face in the delivery of guidance services.

GUIDANCE GOALS

Respondents most often described the goals of their guidance efforts in terms such as "meeting individualized student needs for support and guidance," and "helping students attain the maximum of their potential." As one respondent remarked, "the student comes first, and everything else is secondary." Such statements of guidance department goals accounted for 55 percent of all survey responses to this question.

These student-centered, or client-centered orientations were complemented by other more tangible objectives such as "improving reading, writing, and math, and/or increasing the number of students graduating" (12 percent), and "identifying career and post-high school plans" (16 percent). A few respondents indicated, in frustrated tones, objectives of a more limited and immediate nature: "to see every student once a term," and "to keep up with [student] crises, and mandates from 'top-down' at the same time."

Only three percent of all survey responses mentioned "improving parent and community involvement" as a goal of their guidance departments.

PROBLEMS IN GUIDANCE DELIVERY

Respondents were emphatic and consistent in their answers to questions about problems involved in guidance delivery: "too much paperwork" (66 percent), "lack of parental involvement" (64 percent), "caseloads too big" (59 percent), "not enough guidance personnel" (51 percent), and "too few full-time counselors" (46 percent).

In considering each of these reported problems, OREA has found contradictions between respondents' stated goals, and the models of guidance delivery that apparently underlie department organization and operations in many cases.

Paperwork

The flood of paperwork which most counselors describe probably results, in part, from the influence of systems-planning and accountability models of guidance organization that first took root in the 1970s.* Both models emphasize the importance of defining clear guidance goals, objectives, and standards, and prescribing procedures for follow-up, intervention, and referral. Examples of these models in action in New York City high schools include the "ladder of referral" by which some students are assigned to counselors, the use of computers to alert guidance personnel to students who are in need of special academic counseling or absentee follow-up services, and the ever-

*For a review of models of guidance service delivery that emerged in the early 1970's, see Walz, Garry R. and Rita Mintz, A Review and Analysis of Contemporary Guidance Services and the Design of New Impactful Models, (Ann Arbor, MI: Counseling and Student Services Center, n.d. [1970-75]).

increasing demands placed on counselors and administrators to provide various kinds of data for evaluation of department compliance or non-compliance with a wide range of mandates, objectives and standards.

OREA did not gather samples of this paperwork--except for its own survey questionnaires--in order to evaluate which clerical tasks were essential, superfluous, or redundant. Such analysis would be essential to determine how best to reduce excessive paperwork: by adding clerical personnel, by making significant changes in department organization, and/or by reviewing ongoing clerical tasks to consolidate or eliminate them where possible.

Respondents described their clerical tasks as "an overload of paperwork, monthly reports and make-work lists of information", "multiplying by leaps and bounds", "overwhelming", and decreasing the time available to counsel students. Some respondents indicated that the paperwork involved in student programming was particularly time-consuming.

Though computers have undoubtedly facilitated this increase in paperwork, many respondents suggested that truly accessible centralized data resources could eliminate redundant tasks and make it easier for counselors to have all relevant student records handy when necessary. Two respondents specifically recommended that user-friendly programs be created to allow counselors to interact easily with the University Applications Processing Center (U.A.P.C.)* database.

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*The University Applications Processing Center provides automated student programming, attendance, and other data services to most New York City public high schools.

Family and Community Involvement

The improvement of family and community involvement in guidance efforts was not a high priority of the guidance departments surveyed; only three percent of all responses indicated that this was a goal. At the same time, however, 64 percent of all survey respondents, and 83 percent of counselors interviewed indicated that "lack of parental involvement" was a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services. Moreover, 30 percent of all high schools reported that more than half their students were in serious need of family counseling services, but that 67 percent of these same schools were not able to provide family counseling to the majority of students who needed them.

The 1988-89 Guidance Plan recommended that "encouraging family involvement" be an objective of high school guidance departments,* ostensibly because such involvement would help improve student academic and personal development, strengthen the schools' position in the community, and reinforce the importance of the family as a social unit. As one guidance worker involved in family counseling remarked, "our premise is that families are our main resource."

Notwithstanding the presence of some 300 family assistants in the city's public high schools, and the fact that parents play a key role in the guidance referral system, most schools apparently lack the resources and/or the commitment to carry out this facet of guidance activity.

For many reasons, most guidance departments consider formal family counseling to be outside the traditional scope of the

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*Board of Education, Division of High Schools, Guidance Plan (draft), 1988; p.1.

schools' responsibilities. In the first place, family counseling sessions are notoriously difficult to arrange; counselors must work later hours to accommodate parents' work schedules, something which is not always possible or permissible. More important, family counseling is particularly difficult work, requiring specialized training and extraordinary sensitivity.

Nevertheless, many respondents felt that the role of the school is changing and that family counseling must become an integral part of a total program of guidance services. Their comments suggested that the "guidance system" as currently constituted was insufficient in and of itself to ensure enhanced student success. Without another system, the "family system" for example, to support students concurrently and in parallel fashion, guidance achievements will be limited. Where the family is not a viable support system for the student, other supportive networks outside the schools may be primary. But none of these can replace the family and its capacity for total commitment to students' success.

Caseload

The next three most frequently cited problems in guidance delivery, after excessive paperwork and the lack of parental involvement, were "caseloads too big," "not enough guidance personnel," and "too few full-time counselors." Taken together these comments indicate deep dissatisfaction with current counselor/student ratios.

For purposes of vocational and career planning, counselors have made effective use of group guidance and classroom guidance sessions, two objectives suggested in the Division of High School's Guidance Plan. These models for the delivery of

guidance services are especially useful for dispensing basic information to large numbers of students at once, freeing counselors to spend more time in individual sessions addressing other student needs.

As mentioned previously, respondents reported that students' greatest needs were for academic and personal counseling, involving attendance, discipline, health, psychological, and other issues. Counselors' goals, as we have seen, are usually student-centered, and seek, in the words of one respondent, "to maintain a relationship with each student which will address the needs of the whole child." Such comments reflect an understanding of ideas outlined over 25 years ago by one of the pioneers of modern guidance thinking:

> ...in a wide variety of professional work involving relationships with people--whether as a psychotherapist, teacher, religious worker, guidance counselor, social worker, clinical psychologist--it is the quality of the interpersonal encounter with the client which is the most significant element in determining effectiveness.*

Respondents indicate that current caseloads are simply too large to make this kind of quality interaction available to enough of the students who need it.

One response to this conflict between ambitious goals and limited resources has been the systems-planning and accountability models described above. At their best, such models represent a concerted effort to clarify which services counselors should be providing to students. At their worst, they risk

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*Rogers, Carl R., "The Interpersonal Relationship: The Core of Guidance." Harvard Educational Review 1962 (32).

overlooking the "whole child" by translating literally the behavioral goals of the system into a checklist of routines and procedures.

Respondents were emphatic in their comments on this issue. "Everyday the Board jumps on another bandwagon--AIDS, child abuse, suicide prevention, substance abuse, anti-weapons teach-ins, but we don't have the support services necessary. Let's get realistic. We need additional help." "STOP mandating services on an emergency basis!" commented one counselor. Said another, "there should be less emphasis on 'bandaid programs' and more attention paid to the needs of all students all the time. Additional counselors with less paperwork is a critical need." Many respondents also pointed to the need for enhanced staff development opportunities designed to address specific guidance issues relevant to their student populations. Twenty-four percent indicated that the lack of time for continuing training was a serious problem in the delivery of guidance services. One respondent suggested that all counselors be given intensive training immediately after being hired.

The suggestions for achieving reduced counselor/student ratios included hiring more counselors, hiring more assistants, increasing budget allocations for guidance departments, reducing paperwork, reorganizing departments to make better use of guidance and total school resources, and reducing school populations. Several respondents commented favorably on the

experimental Ninth Grade Houses program,* which addresses problems of student alienation and anonymity by restructuring high school ninth grades into smaller units providing integrated instruction and guidance services.

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*OREA's "Ninth Grade Houses, 1987-1988 End-of-Year Report" described and evaluated this program.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, OREA has described the general features of guidance organization and operations in New York City public high schools. OREA surveyed 122 high school administrators and interviewed a representative sample of 36 licensed counselors regarding a range of issues, including the administration and supervision of guidance departments, the numbers and kinds of personnel working in guidance, the daily activities of counselors, communications within guidance departments, the integration of guidance within the larger school community, the referral system, caseloads, student needs, departmental strengths and weaknesses, and the problems that hinder effective delivery of guidance services.

The main purpose of this study was to describe and analyze current guidance activities in New York City public high schools. It was not meant to be a complete evaluation of the overall effectiveness of high school guidance programs. Indeed, evaluation of the success of a guidance system is fraught with methodological difficulties and could never be a straightforward matter of measuring student outcomes, pretest and posttest scores, and other standard techniques of assessment. In a review of the literature on high school guidance, OREA found no good examples of overall evaluation methods in this field. Ideally, guidance is a holistic service whose goals and results are often intangible. Thus, complete evaluation and identification of exemplary guidance models and practices would require qualitative

data that are beyond the scope of this study.

Based on respondents' answers in surveys and interviews, OREA evaluators found that current guidance services today are more integrated into everyday school life than they were 15 years ago. However, respondents indicated that guidance department organization and staffing patterns do not facilitate the quality of guidance delivery necessary to successfully address student needs, which are acute across the spectrum.

OREA evaluators also found that the administration of high school guidance departments comprises a discernible hierarchy, with distinct domains of decision-making, marked by an institutionalized referral system, too much paperwork, and insufficient resources. The counselors, too, are swamped by excessive caseloads, distracted by heavy paperwork, and too often frustrated by their inability to deal effectively with the serious student needs.

In most schools the assistant principal for Pupil Personnel Services oversees guidance department operations, and consults with the principal on guidance goals and strategies. Communication of department priorities and procedures is effective from top down--from administrators to counselors and other guidance personnel. The data suggest, however, that in some cases communications up the hierarchy, and horizontally--between counselors--may be less efficient. Moreover, the interactions between counselors and teachers, who have more contact with students than any other school personnel, are often

indirect, being channelled through the assistant principals for Supervision. Finally, most assistant principals for Pupil Personnel Services are overburdened, and many respondents suggested that this position and its current allocations be reevaluated.

OREA found that there are 856 licensed counselors of more than six different types engaged in a wide variety of counseling activities in the 122 high schools surveyed. In addition, 2,892 guidance associates, ranging from part-time clerical aides to full-time psychologists, assist in delivering guidance services to the 226,000 students in these schools. OREA evaluators did not ask respondents about the precise functions of the diverse guidance associates, so no conclusions are drawn about the relative contributions of licensed counselors and guidance associates to total guidance delivery.

Moreover, this formative study did not collect data on the views of students or teachers regarding the guidance system. Therefore, OREA draws no conclusions about whether the guidance system is "user-friendly," or whether students are daunted by the complexity of the guidance process.

Respondents reported that the greatest strengths of the guidance system are academic and personal counseling. Absentee follow-up and crisis intervention were also considered department strengths, and procedures for addressing these problems have improved considerably over the last 15 years. On the other hand, OREA found that family counseling, alcohol and drug abuse

counseling, and other kinds of health counseling were guidance imperatives that are not being adequately met.

Career development and vocational planning were high priorities in many departments, as reflected both in the guidance goals mentioned by respondents, and the time actually spent by counselors in such activities. Sixty-one percent of counselors interviewed indicated that they discussed vocational planning in their required meetings with students, 50 percent discussed program planning, and 44 percent counseled students on college opportunities. These activities correspond both with departmental goals and with the Board of Education priorities outlined in the 1988-89 Guidance Plan.

OREA evaluators found that group guidance sessions and a curriculum oriented to the delivery of guidance services were also common. More than three-quarters of the counselors interviewed reported that weekly or monthly group and/or classroom sessions are important components of overall guidance strategies, especially as regards college, career, and general education counseling and school orientation. These are effective models for introducing basic information to large numbers of students, and generally comply with guidelines set forth in the Guidance Plan.

Family counseling activities, on the other hand, did not meet the guidelines suggested by the Board's Guidance Plan. Only three percent of respondents indicated that the improvement of family and community involvement in guidance efforts was a

department goal, despite the fact that 64 percent of survey respondents and 83 percent of counselors reported that "lack of parental involvement" was a serious impediment to the delivery of guidance services.

The greatest obstacles to the successful delivery of guidance services were excessive paperwork, the lack of family involvement in the guidance process, and caseloads that are too large. OREA found that two-thirds of all licensed counselors had caseloads that exceeded the recommended ideal of 250 students, and that this ideal itself was outdated and too large to allow counselors to adequately address the level of student needs in contemporary New York City public high schools.

Respondents suggested several alternatives for reforming the guidance system to make it better able to cope with ever more critical student needs. They recommended reducing the average size of caseloads, hiring more counselors and other guidance personnel, and reorganizing departments and/or schools to create smaller, more integrated units within which guidance teams could more holistically address the needs of the whole student.

Based on these findings, OREA offers the following recommendations:

- Further research should be conducted to gather qualitative data through direct observations and analyses of guidance case studies. Teachers and students' perceptions of the guidance system should be included in such a study. This will allow more accurate assessment of the quality and effectiveness of guidance counseling as an integrated component of the total high school environment.

- High schools should reevaluate the role of their Assistant Principal for Pupil Personnel Services or chief guidance administrator in order to reduce the concentration of decision-making responsibilities and paperwork at the top of the guidance hierarchy.

- Guidance planners should facilitate the expansion of the high schools' capacity to provide family counseling to students in need of such services.

- Guidance planners should evaluate strategies for school and/or department reorganization, perhaps along the lines of the Ninth Grade Houses program, in order to create smaller, more integrated sub-units within the schools. This would allow guidance departments to respond more flexibly to the needs of their students, and may help streamline the referral process.

- Average caseloads should be reduced to fewer than 250 students per counselor, by reorganizing the delivery of guidance services, and/or hiring more guidance personnel. Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated to allow counselors more time with students.